

Table 11.1 Level of Self-Esteem Inventory

	Like me	Unlike me
I'm pretty sure of myself.		
I often wish I were someone else.		
I never worry about anything.		
There are lots of things about myself I'd change if I could.		
I can make up my mind without too much trouble.		
I'm doing the best work that I can.		
I give in very easily.		
My parents expect too much of me.		
Kids usually follow my ideas.		

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- ◆ **Power**—the extent to which one has control or influence over one's life and that of others. Alice is able to minimize or discount the teasing of others; Zelda is sensitive to others' judgments. She takes them as confirmation of her self-image of helplessness.

More recent research concurs with Coopersmith's conclusions (Harter, 2006, 2012). Whereas Coopersmith measured overall self-esteem, Susan Harter (1990, 2006, 2012) measured the five specific areas of competence listed earlier, as well as general feelings of self-worth ("I am happy with myself") in the Self-Perception Profile for Children. Harter found that self-esteem is well established by middle childhood. Children can make global judgments of their worth as well as distinguish their competencies. For example, a child may perceive himself as a poor athlete but good scholastically. Finally, children's perceptions of themselves accurately reflect how others perceive them. Thus, Cooley's "looking-glass self" and Mead's "generalized other," described in Chapter 2, have found their way into contemporary conceptions of the self.

11-11a Influences on the Development of Self-Esteem

Family

Many research studies confirm that parental approval is particularly critical in determining the self-esteem of children (Harter, 2006, 2012).

Coopersmith (1967) investigated children's treatment by significant others—those whose attitudes matter most when children are forming their self-concepts. He did this by examining the parenting practices employed by his subjects' fathers and mothers. He focused on acceptance of the child and affection exhibited, the kind and amount of punishment used, the level of achievement demands placed on the child, the strictness and consistency with which rules were enforced, the extent to which the child was allowed to participate in family decision making, the extent to which the child was listened to and consulted when rules were being set and enforced, and the extent to which the child was allowed independence.

Coopersmith found some clear relationships between the parenting practices and self-esteem of sons. Parents of boys with high self-esteem were more often characterized as follows.

- ◆ **Warm** (accepting and affectionate). They frequently showed affection to their children, took an interest in their affairs, and became acquainted with their friends.

• *Strict*, but used noncoercive discipline. They enforced rules carefully and consistently. They believed it was important for children to meet high standards. They were firm and decisive in telling the child what he might or might not do. They disciplined their children by withdrawing privileges and by isolation. They tended to discuss the reasons behind the discipline with the children.

• *Democratic*. They allowed the children to participate in making family plans. The children were permitted to express their own opinions, even if it involved questioning the parents' point of view.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Baumrind (1967) found a similar relationship between an authoritative parenting style (high acceptance and high demandingness) and competent European

American children. Similar connections were found in studies of competent European American adolescents (Steinberg, 2010). However, these findings don't always apply cross-culturally. For example, research on over 1,200 adolescents in Brazil, a collectivistic culture that is democratic, showed that those who scored the highest on self-esteem measures had parents who were indulgent or permissive, exhibiting high responsiveness and low demandingness (Martinez, Garcia, & Yubero, 2007). For another example, Chao (1994, 2001) found that Chinese children, whose cultural heritage is hierarchical and collectivistic, benefited the most from an authoritarian parenting style (low responsiveness and high demandingness). An explanation for such cross-cultural differences is that parenting practices have different meanings and different outcomes in different cultures. In other words, parents who reflect the culture in their child-rearing practices are likely to have children with high self-esteem because the children have been socialized to "fit in."

School

Keep in mind that the valued personality type in American culture is a responsible, self-reliant, autonomous, competent individual; the child who is reared to conform to these traits is likely to have high self-esteem. It has been found that students with higher self-esteem are more likely to be successful in school and achieve more than children with

Brain briefs

Biological Mechanisms Related to Self-Esteem

Self-esteem, the value we place on ourselves, has been associated with effects on health, life expectancy, and life satisfaction. As discussed in this chapter, internal locus of control, the individuals' perceptions of being in control of their outcomes, has been shown to correlate with self-esteem.

According to Pruessner and colleagues (2005), variations in self-esteem and internal locus of control have been shown to predict the hormonal response to stress, release of cortisol. Cumulative exposure to high levels of cortisol over one's lifetime is known to be related to brain damage in the hippocampus (located in the medial temporal lobe of the brain), which is involved with memory as well as spatial navigation. Thus, the researchers examined hippocampal volume and cortisol regulation to investigate potential biological mechanisms related to self-esteem.

The study included 16 healthy young subjects (ages 20–26) and 23 healthy elderly subjects (ages 60–84). The young subjects were exposed to a psychosocial stress task (such as giving a 5-minute presentation and doing a 5-minute mental arithmetic exercise, counting backwards from 1,022 in steps of 13; if a mistake is made, the subject must start again from the beginning). Blood tests of the elderly subjects indicated how their bodies regulated cortisol naturally.

Structural magnetic resonance images were acquired from all subjects, and the volume of the medial temporal lobe structures, as well as the whole brain gray matter, was analyzed.

Standardized neurological assessments, which include data about a subject's cognitive, motor, behavioral, linguistic, and executive functioning were performed on both the elderly and the young subjects. The study showed that self-esteem and internal locus of control were significantly correlated with hippocampal volume in both young and elderly subjects. In the young, the cortisol response to the psychosocial stress task was significantly correlated with both hippocampal volume and levels of self-esteem and locus of control, while in the elderly, self-esteem and internal locus of control lessened the impact of age-related patterns of cognitive decline, cortisol regulation, and global brain volume decline.

IN PRACTICE

How Can Parents and Teachers Enhance Children's Self-Esteem?

1. *Enable children to feel accepted.* Understand and attend to their needs, be warm, accept their individuality, talk to them, and listen to them.
2. *Enable children to be autonomous.* Provide opportunities for them to do things themselves, give them choices, encourage curiosity, encourage pride in achievement, provide challenges.
3. *Enable children to be successful.* Be an appropriate model, set clear limits, praise accomplishments and efforts, explain consequences and how to learn from mistakes.
4. *Enable children to interact with others positively.* Provide opportunities to cooperate with others, enable them to work out differences dealing with feelings and others' perspectives.
5. *Enable children to be responsible.* Encourage participation, provide opportunities for them to care for belongings, help with chores, and help others.

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low self-esteem (Harter, 2006, 2012). This relationship shows up as early as the primary grades and becomes even stronger as the student gets older.

Children who are raised in diverse cultural groups and experience different socialization from that of European American children do not necessarily follow this pattern. For example, in a study of adolescents representing major cultural groups in the United States, Bankston and Zhou (2002) found that children of Asian immigrants do have the lowest self-reported level of self-esteem, yet have the highest grade-point averages. On the other hand, nonimmigrant African American children report the highest level of self-esteem, yet show low grade-point averages. Despite this apparent inconsistency, there is a positive relationship between school performance and self-esteem. The researchers explain that the parental immigrant status may influence self-reported low self-esteem (collectivistic versus individualistic orientations), but the adolescent's actual high achievement contributes to high self-esteem (in collectivistic cultures, it is viewed as making the family proud; in individualistic cultures, it is viewed as being competitive).

Peers

Children can be quite cruel to one another, as was discussed in Chapter 8. They tease and ostracize children who are different physically, intellectually, linguistically, or socially. Peer attitudes about "ideal" size, physique, and physical capabilities can influence children's self-esteem. Harter (2006, 2012) found that perceived physical appearance is consistently the domain most highly correlated with self-esteem from early childhood through adulthood, with no gender differences.

It is generally agreed that there are three basic human body types: *endomorphism* (short, heavy build), *mesomorphism* (medium, muscular build), and *ectomorphism* (tall, lean build). Of course, in reality, most people are variations of these basic body types. Body type plays a role in self-esteem in cultures that emphasize a certain ideal type. In the United States, the ideal type for females is slim, well proportioned, and well toned; for males, it is the muscular type. Thus, short, fat adolescent girls (Clay, Vignoles, & Dittmar, 2005) and boys as well as tall, skinny adolescent boys (Cohane & Pope, 2001) are unhappy with their bodies. In general, children whose appearance differs from that of their peers tend to have lower self-esteem than those who are like their peers and who conform to their peers' ideal.

Not only does one's appearance compared to the perceived ideal of one's peers affect self-esteem, so does one's perceived status in relation to the rest of the group. Studies have found children's and adolescents' self-esteem to be dependent on their perceived popularity among their friends (DeBruyn & Van Den Boom, 2005; Harter, 2006, 2012). In addition, studies report that the self-esteem of adolescents is related to the status of the

group to which they belong at school. Generally, those who belong to the in clique exhibit higher self-esteem than outsiders (Newman & Newman, 2011).

Mass Media

Where do children get their attitudes about ideal body and personality types? Advertising strategies on television and in magazines portray ideal physical stereotypes—handsome, mesomorphic, well-dressed men; beautiful, trim, well-dressed women. Advertising techniques often lead the viewer or reader to believe that the product advertised will produce or perpetuate ideal characteristics. For men, the TV emphasis is on strength, performance, and skill; for women, it is on attractiveness and desirability (Crawford & Unger, 2000; Pipher, 2005; Wolf, 2002). According to psychiatrists Derenne and Beresin (2006), who traced the portrayal of body images in the media throughout history, “the ideal of beauty has been difficult to achieve and has been shaped by social context ... Current mass media is ubiquitous and powerful, leading to increased body dissatisfaction among both men and women (p. 257).” According to Naomi Wolf, author of *The Beauty Myth* (2002), children’s heroes and heroines in the media serve as models for the ideal type, and the self-serving interests of advertisers make the ideal unattainable, thereby promoting low self-esteem in order to motivate purchase of their products.

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Myspace, among other social media networking sites, enable their users to create a public profile as well as build relationships. Many studies have been done linking self-esteem, as well as other personality characteristics, to social media use. For example, a study by Tazghini and Siedlecki (2013) found that the level of self-esteem in college students was related to their engagement in different online behaviors. Those with lower self-esteem compensated socially by associating feelings of connectedness to Facebook, accepting friend requests from individuals they did not know well. They also untagged themselves in photos more frequently. Those students with higher self-esteem were more likely to report that a positive aspect of Facebook was the ability to share pictures, thoughts, and ideas, and to report that other posts could become annoying or bothersome.

For another example, according to Correa, Hinsley, and de Zuniga (2010), the literature suggests personality factors such as extroversion, emotional stability, and openness to experience are related to uses of social applications on the Internet. Using a national sample of U.S. adults, Correa and colleagues (2010) investigated the relationship between these three dimensions of personality and social media use (social networking sites and instant messages). Results revealed that while extroversion and openness to experiences were positively related to social media use, emotional stability was not. Controlling for sociodemographics and life satisfaction, the findings differed by gender and age. While extroverted men and women were both likely to be more frequent users of social media tools, only the emotionally unstable men, rather than the women, were more regular users.

Still another example, a study by Gonzales and Hancock (2011), found that viewing one’s own Facebook profile fostered self-awareness and, in so doing, enhanced one’s self-esteem. Participants who updated their profiles and viewed their own profiles during the experiment also reported greater self-esteem. These findings suggest that selective self-presentation in digital media, which leads to intensified relationship formation, also influences impressions of the self.

Community

The community, especially the business community, may contribute to the differences found in the self-esteem of males and females. Even though there are wider occupational choices for women today, they still earn less than men and there still is sexism present in the workplace (Bennett, Ellison, & Ball, 2010). This means that women don’t advance as quickly as men and that attitudes about women’s capabilities are still generally

stereotyped. Thus, for women entering the business community, there is often a drop in self-esteem (Basow, 2008).

The relation between an individual's social identity (culture, religion, social class) and that of the majority of the people in the neighborhood affects one's self-esteem (Harter, 2006, 2012; Martinez & Dukes, 1991; Rosenberg, 1975). For example, Rosenberg (1975) found that the Jewish children raised in Jewish neighborhoods were likely to have higher self-esteem than Jewish children raised in Catholic neighborhoods. He and others (Martinez & Dukes, 1991) also found that African American students in integrated schools were likely to have lower self-esteem than those in all-African American schools. Children of lower socioeconomic status attending a school where the majority of children were of higher socioeconomic status also had lower self-esteem than those attending a school where the majority of children were from lower SES environments. The same was true of children of upper SES who were in the minority. Apparently, being socially different affects one's self-esteem, as has already been discussed in regard to appearance.

Summary

- Values are qualities or beliefs that are viewed as desirable or important. They are outcomes of socialization and provide the framework in which we think, feel, and act.
- An attitude is a tendency to respond positively or negatively to certain persons, objects, or situations. Attitudes are composed of beliefs, feelings, and action tendencies.
- The development of attitudes is influenced by age, cognitive development, and social experiences.
- The media, the community, and the school have the potential to change prejudicial and stereotypical attitudes toward diversity.
- A motive causes a person to act. An attribution is an explanation of one's performance when one does act.
- Individuals are motivated to control the outcomes of their efforts. This motivation is exhibited in the need to achieve, or be competent, called achievement motivation or mastery orientation.
- Locus of control relates to one's sense of personal responsibility. Individuals who believe they are in control of their world have an internal locus of control. Individuals who perceive that others or outside events have more control over them than they have over themselves have an external locus of control.
- Locus of control is related to age, gender, socioeconomic status, and performance attributes and outcomes.
- Self-efficacy refers to the belief that one can master a situation and produce positive outcomes. It is a performance-based measure of perceived capability. It is related to achievement motivation, locus of control, and learned helplessness.
- Self-esteem, the value one places on one's self-concept, is derived from the reflected appraisal of others. Specific dimensions of self-esteem in European American society include scholastic competence, athletic competence, social competence, physical appearance, and behavioral conduct, as well as global self-worth. Diverse cultures differ in the emphasis put on these dimensions.
- The factors contributing to the development of self-esteem are the amount of respectful, accepting, and concerned treatment individuals receive from significant others; their history of successes and failures; their status among peers; and their manner of responding to failure.